**Clearing the table**

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# Clearing the table

by AtticusCrete


Summary

I'm rubbish at summaries. So. Angel maker, camping, Will's dad, Mischa explains the past, Hannibal leans a bit on Will, Will is ill, and phone sex. Because if was Wedneaday when I wrote this.

This is an AU where we don't yet know if Hannibal is or isn't the Ripper. At this point Will and Hannibal have just about finally almost certainly got it together. Follows the timeline more or less, some extra deaths and stories. Because, writing. Team Sassy Science are a thing. Beverly Katz is the best. Always. Abigail Hobbs was behind the Shrike murders! Matthew Brown is her cousin. Mischa lives! So does Franklyn, so far.


Notes

See the end of the work for notes

# Chapter 1

Zeller was good but erratic, Jimmy Price, consistent and competent but cautious, Bev either brilliant or a total disaster, and Will indifferent but surprisingly effective over tricky impossible bound-to-miss-but-didn't shots. Easy, straight, can't-possibly-miss though? Utter rubbish, of course. And didn't that just sum up Will's life to all of them.

They'd tried various team combinations over the evening to try and even up the odds. Each pairing was pretty poor overall. And at this stage in the evening they were all a bit too drunk and were missing pretty well every other shot. They'd just about given up when Hannibal and Jack joined them at the pool table.

The presence of their boss sobered and straightened them all up just a little, the presence of Dr Hannibal 'Plushy Pants' Lecter himself caused a little ripple of electricity all round the group. The last time they'd been on the road he and Will had had a bit of a thing, again, for sure. But here they were weeks down the line and whatever it was that might have been starting seemed to have stalled, also again. Not for want of Bev trying though, she'd got plans for her wonky friend and his weird but cute psychiatrist.

Jack took the cue from Zeller and promptly cleared the table. 'Ooh, nice, can you do tricks too? Each pot could get you a prize, say, a kiss from the person of your choice. One kiss per ball' Bev glanced round, she knew both her boss and her co-workers pretty well, 'Ok, it's not much of a choice I'll admit..' Jack laughed and gave up the cue 'Not my game' he said.

Dr Lecter took the cue and proceeded to set up a complicated arrangement of balls on the table 'I'm more used to bar billiards, but we'll see what I can manage' he cleared his throat, 'One kiss per ball? Off one cue? I'll have to make it count' The rest of the group nodded together. He glanced at Beverly, smiled slightly, and then at Will and leant in over the table. He moved minutely and cued.

Everyone watched as each ball shot into different pockets. 'Wow, 15 balls in just one shot!' Squeaked Jimmy 'that's a lot of kisses! 'I'll make those count too' said Hannibal as he steered Will towards the exit.

# Chapter 2

He won fifteen kisses. And they are all good. Exceptional in Will's experience of kisses. And he'll be cool and play it down but there have been a few. They've kissed before of course (he smiles at the 'of course') but this time it feels like it might not just be kisses. Will suddenly feels a teeny bit nervous.

Hannibal is already nervous. The kissing is the easy bit. He's kept a steady hand and a steady head before, but where Will is concerned his heart is anything but steady. His fingers aren't as dexterous as he'd like as he starts to unbutton Will's shirt. Will is fighting with the buttons on his vest. It means they get in the way of each other. But they manage some humour and laugh around the kissing.

Hannibal has undone all of Will's shirt and is trying to remove it. It's a particularly awful shirt so he won't be sorry if something befalls it, but he doesn't want to distract Will with its loss. Will has managed his vest and is now working on his shirt. The buttons do their part and Will moans about how many there are. Hannibal is about to launch into an interesting piece of commentary on buttons, but Will heads him off at the pass with a searing kiss, and a facetious comment.

Will is working on Hannibal's cufflinks. Why the fuck does he have cufflinks, he has enough fucking buttons. God why did he ever think the buttons were sexy? Ok, maybe the unbuttons. And don't fucking talk about them too! He gets one cufflink off and carefully places it on the side making sure Hannibal sees him do so, it's a pretty thing, gold and ebony by the look and feel. Nice. If it wasn't between him and getting this sodding shirt off.

As Will manages the next cufflink it pings off somewhere under the furniture. At first he drops down in the thought of instantly retrieving it. Then he can't see it and Hannibal drops to his knees to look too. Neither had imagined they'd be on their knees before the other with cufflinks on their mind.

There's a surpassing amount of fluff under hotel furniture, where the vacuum cleaner doesn't quite reach, or where it never really gets moved properly out of the way. They spend several minutes disconcerted by their findings.

After a short while they've both cooled down somewhat. Will wanting not to have lost the damn thing, Hannibal trying to think of a way to say he doesn't give a flying fuck in a thunderstorm about the cufflink as long as Will won't get hung up on either the cost of the damn thing or that he pinged it into the 'undergrowth'.

Just as Hannibal has decided to risk it, Will finds it right between the edge of the carpet and the base board.

'How did it get there!' He exclaims before straightening up not quite out from under the dressing table, cracking his head on the underneath edge of the drawer.

He's momentarily stunned, sinking back down.

'Will!' Hannibal carefully stretches out a hand to feel at the back of Will's head. He glances at the drawer, there's a smear of red there. His hand comes away bloody from the long gash that Will is now sporting. Will hasn't been knocked out, but he's possibly mildly concussed. And he has drunk a fair bit this evening. They both have, so Hannibal is reluctant to assume Will is ok.

So they go to the local ER. What a sad and dismal place that is to spend the next six hours. One of the nurses is a bit shitty with them as she takes the details of what happened. She looks at them as though Hannibal is either slumming it, or Will is. It's hard to tell which particular bit of nastiness is occupying her brain.

She doesn't quite sneer. But it's close. They both feel indignant on behalf of the other. And Hannibal is concerned about Will becoming stressed, in particular if he is also concussed. Will meanwhile is concerned that Hannibal will think the woman unconscionably rude. Hannibal doesn't do well with rude. Not at all.

Eventually Will is seen, his head is checked, the gash is inspected. And he's sent home, well, back to the hotel, with painkillers and not much more to show for his trouble. In the taxi back he holds Hannibal's hand under the jacket he has casually thrown across the middle of the back seat.

Back at the hotel his head is throbbing and he's mildly surprised to see Garrett Jacob Hobbs beckoning him. That's not happened for a while. He glances at Hannibal.

'We don't seem to get much luck. I am glad we found the cufflink though. Shall we try and get some sleep? What time is it?'

'Just before 5. We should try. Will you come in?'

'Yeah. No funny business though I don't think I could manage anything right now'

'Will, I assure you, no funny business. Humour, inventive dialogue, arbitrary use of descriptive nouns? Maybe'

'That's what I meant. Shut up. Here. Kiss the side of my mouth and don't jostle me or I might be sick'

'Such an inviting image'

'Says the doctor'

'Retired from that particular kind of practice'

'Isn't it awful that doctors have to practice?'

Hannibal huffs 'I thought you said no funny business!'

'Show me where the bed is, undo my shoes and then just let me die quietly.'

They sleep.

Until a little after 8:30am. Not long enough but better than nothing.

At breakfast the others give them a bit of a look. Will smiles and says brightly

'Guess what we did last night?'

'What!' There is a collective splutter. Surely not, not over breakfast! And why doesn't Hannibal look as though he wishes the earth would open up?

'I hit my head on a drawer (don't fucking ask) and we spent six hours in the ER in the company of either a homophobic nurse or someone with a truly terrible bedside manner. Wouldn't you say Hannibal? (Hannibal nods.)

'Six hours? What else had happened. That seems like an awfully long time?'

'There was an accident, apparently involving a motorised wheelchair buggy and a stationary car. Not nice for the person in the wheelchair, but, well I was bumped for him. And the child who'd come in with some lego stuck up their nose. And the person who'd been using a vacuum cleaner hose inappropriately (no, really), and the person who attempted to iron the shirt they were wearing'

'What? How does that work. I mean what did they do to warrant a visit to the hospital?'

Hannibal volunteers 'they tried to iron it whilst they were wearing it. There are several thousand incidents like this in hospitals every year. It's worse the higher the synthetic content of the shirt' he deadpans, so at first they think he is joking. He isn't.

'Ok. She definitely didn't like you then. Are you ok now?'

'Apart from being a bit grumpy, yeah. I am.' He looks at Hannibal and smiles regretfully. 'It's just not the evening I hoped for'

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Will stretches his back and rolls his shoulders. He glances out of the sliver of window he has in his office. He's lucky to have anything with a view of the outside.

He could do with a whole day off. Laundry. There's so much to do he's considered ordering a multipack from Amazon or Walmart or something. Socks, underwear, a dozen undershirts. Or he could buckle under and do the laundry. If he had time.

Food too. He'd get a delivery if he thought he'd be home for it. Proper time with the dogs. Walks, games, fun. Fishing. Books. He has a pile of new books, or old new books. To read. He hasn't read properly since those ten days in the cabin. He read more than a book a day then. He hasn't completed a book in, he can't remember. Isn't sure what he was last reading.

Sad. Well, not sad, busy. Jack has him re-looking at the Ripper case files. Ever since the stuff with Gideon at the hospital. And Miriam! And even Abigail. And the stuff with Cassie Boyle

and Marissa Schurr. Is there a copycat at work? How is Abigail tied into it? Is she?

He's barely seen Hannibal. They manage to talk almost every day. Thank goodness. And they've discussed him finding a new therapist unless things ease off a bit at work and he can have a bit of a break.

Not because Hannibal isn't good at what he does. More because they're both admitting freely now that they're permanently involved in some way in each other's lives. Well. Not so much admit it. They've both been thinking it for a while, and even talking about it sometimes, and trying to wrap themselves around the words in public. More sort of acknowledge what everyone else thinks is already there. Wills almost used the 'L' word a few times. Hannibal might have too. Mischa says he does when he talks about Will.

Though there are still some obstacles. Will is trying to work up a way to tell his dad. His dad thought Hannibal was ok when they met. But meeting a friend is a whole different thing from meeting the man who isn't going to give your son children. Well probably not, not in Wills dad's world, he thinks. Though he might be being unfair to his dad. He wonders if his dad would come up to visit again.

He reaches for his cell phone. Really if he has some time he ought to spend it with Hannibal. But the peace he and his dad reached is worth shoring up. Maybe just a day or two?

'Dad? It's Will. Yeah I'm alright. Really. No, I'd tell you. Or I'd have a better excuse! Yeah, I know. Do you want to come up for a few days? We're between cases. No. I'm just looking at old case files. Yeah. There's always someone who got away. Sure. Thursday? Till Sunday? Really? That's great dad. Will you meet some of my friends. Yeah Hannibal too. Did you. I wasn't sure. Good. Yeah but maybe some from work. I know he is too. But who work for the FBI not with them. Ok. Let me know times and stuff. Great. That was surprisingly easy to sort out. I know. Twice in a few months. Making up for it? Sure. Good though? Yeah. Great. See you soon.'

He switches his cell off. Ok. Maybe a bit spontaneous given the state of the rest of his life. But it could be a focus.

He texts Jack

*Jack, hi, my father is coming up on Thursday. Just some family stuff. I'd like Friday off. Obviously barring disaster. Let me know if that's a problem. The class is on some training exercise for the weekend so I won't need a sub, cheers, Will.*

He texts Beverly and then Jimmy and Price and two of the interns,

*hey. My dad (I know! Amazing I have one, I wasn't making him up before. They didn't grow me in a lab like Ripley. Hey is that where Ripley believe it or not came from? Or the other way round?) is coming up Thursday, want to hang out on Friday night, maybe through to Saturday morning? We can put up the teepee and put the heater in it? I know it's November but with enough of us and the dogs we'll be fine. There'll be food... and beer... and stuff. You like stuff! And no dead bodies. I promise. Cheers, Will*

And then Hannibal

*hey, Hannibal. So, my dad is coming up Thursday. We just spoke. He said he liked you last time (outstanding job there btw as he volunteered it). Would you be willing to come over? I'd like it too? Friday he's going to meet the science team. We'll probably put up the teepee and sleep out over night. I think that might not be your thing. But you could come and have one of the beds in the house? Or I might just be giving you excuses not to come, Bev says I do that. Do I do that? Anyway please come Friday if you'd like it or come Saturday for the day, afternoon, and defiantly for dinner. Do you like how it autocorrected to 'defiantly', I was trying to say definitely! I hope you will? I haven't seen you enough recently. I miss you.. Will (in case you wondered who was sending you not quite flirty texts. I'm not very good at flirty texts)*

He reads it again. Maybe a little much. He deletes half and then puts it back in. What the heck! They'd got a little distant over the last week. No way. Not again! He presses send.

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At home Hannibal is just finishing washing up from lunch. He has been thinking about Will. Since returning from the road trip where Will was concussed they have both been busy. Will has been submerged in Chesapeake Ripper files and associated horror. Hannibal has been endeavouring to stay out of Will's mental range whilst he considers the files and the possibilities they hold. He's not exactly concerned just aware. And Will is good at spotting awareness. Even if, where Hannibal is concerned he doesn't always get to the right reasons for that feeling. Will is also good at spotting patterns. So. Better to not be tempted either. There are other obstacles to his and Will's developing relationship currently concerning him.

At some point he is going to have to explain the family complications. He can't decide whether to do it sooner and risk alienating or disconcerting Will, or to leave it for a bit when there is a possibility that Will might feel he was deceived. This is a no win situation so Hannibal wonders which is the least worst. He knows too, that at home they're expecting some kind of resolution, and introduction and recognition.

Will had almost got to the truth recently, but Hannibal had neatly steered him away. Perhaps that wasn't so clever. Perhaps. Hannibal knows he is torn by the past and how it is intersecting with the sharp tracery of the future and thus the discomfort it makes of the present. His sister and all that she entails is a challenge of the highest order. And if he doesn't tell Will, he might be pre-empted or have his hand forced. None of these are good scenarios.

He also misses Will. Sharply. More than he'd anticipated. They haven't seen each other for longer than at any other time since they met. It had taken him a day or two to realise this. And when he did he felt a moderate amount of alarm. Not at the absence, though that stings. But at how much he feels the absence.

He'd expected to inhabit Will's life and almost put him on and off like a much loved coat. Instead he's sure it's the other way round. He is the petitioner. And Will the abstracted aloof prize.

His cell buzzes and Hannibal reads the message, ah, maybe not so aloof. And then. Camping? In November. He'll take the bed in the house. Thank you. He then realises he is sincerely considering spending Friday night with Will's father, Will, and the science team, and Saturday. And possibly Saturday night, though that is harder to tell. But likely. Dear god. He must sort out the family issue. Maybe with Beau there?

*Will. How entertaining. Your father (I liked him too), the science team and a tent. How unmissable. And thank you for the offer of a bed. Yes please. I shall not incite comment by mentioning age as an excuse. Especially if your father enjoys the outdoor life at night, with microns of canvas between him and the rest of nature. All biting and stinging in the darkness. I couldn't tell if you intended me to stay Saturday night. Might I suggest we see how it goes. Maybe you will wish to have a whole day with your father without other company? I am delighted to accept the invitation. I shall not describe all the ways in which I too miss you. Warmly, Hannibal Lecter

# Is camping intense?

Chapter Summary

> Will's dad visits. There's family stuff. Relationship stuff. Friend stuff. Pretty fluffy, just a soupçon of angst...

Beau Graham looks at his son. He spotted him as soon as he got into the arrivals hall. Will hasn't seen him yet. So he can approach unobserved. He's still amazed they've got it together somehow. He's a good boy. He always was a weird boy, but of his four children Will is the one he most regretted 'getting away'. Will's sister and two bothers went off to college too. For a while it looked like Will might be the stay at home. But then he found his thing and that was it.

They managed almost twenty years of minimal contact. Christmas. One bad Thanksgiving. Birthday cards, or texts, or rushed phone calls. And then just after Beau was reading about his boy in the papers he gets a call. And he goes. And just like that, somehow they click back into place. Sure Will is still a bit weird. But he's got a name for the weirdness and he can talk about it.

Honestly? Beau is amazed at how much he likes Will. He might not seek someone like him out - he's too well read, likes classical music (that's his Grandmaw's fault for sure), too thoughtful. But he's still a skilled mechanic. Still good with animals, dogs especially. Fishing. The outdoors. He's a good cook too, not fancy, but good. And he's decent. He's even got friends by the sound of it.

Beau wonders if Will wants to tell him he's gay. Or Bi. He likes Hannibal. Also a bit fancy. But an interesting guy. Didn't talk down to him last time they met. He'd always thought Will was gay. Since he was a teenager. He's been waiting for Will to tell him. Maybe he will this weekend. Maybe he'll just ask, casual like. Ahh. Good, Will sees him. He waves.

'Dad. Dad, I'm so glad you've come.' Will suddenly feels a bit emotional. His dad. He called, and his dad came. Just like that. His dad hugs him. That too is new. He can't remember being hugged after he was about six. Now his dad hugs him as though he's a life raft. And maybe they are, somehow for each other. 'Alright boy? How's my Will?'

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Will cooks something simple, just pasta, garlic bread, meatballs and a sauce. Chicory coffee for after. His dad brought a box of cookies. They eat those with the hot drink, dipping them in so the chocolate just starts to melt. Making little swirls in the surface.

'I'm glad to be here. Anything special for it? Or just needing a break?'

'How do you know me so well, when you don't know me at all? I can't get my head round it?'

'Says the boy who can get his head round most things, most people too.'

'I know. It's harder when it's people I love. It's like I want to give them privacy. But it's also like something shuts down and won't let me intrude. I've tried to explain it. But, actually I didn't know it was a feature of me caring for someone, I thought just, my thing, didn't always work.'

'Boy, no one has said they loved me for more than two decades, maybe since your Ma. I'm going to get all sentimental now.' He smiles. But there's sadness and maybe joy in there too. 'How did you find it out?'

'I have a few proper friends now, they're all people I love, and the more I do, the less I can see. It's odd. But good. It means I can't exploit their feelings'

'Or the other way round?'

'Yeah. Though sometimes if they're good to me I still reflect back. So it's not always an immediate clue. I can't always tell. It takes sustained exposure!'

'Boy who are you exposing yourself to?'

Will laughs, 'you're going to meet some of them tomorrow. You brought your camping stuff?'

'Sure, couple of mats, sleeping bag, blankets, pillows I hope you got? What we sleeping in and where?'

'Not too far away, I've a teepee, not full size but enough for ten plus the dogs if no one starts to sneeze. And a heater.'

'Sounds good. We putting it up tomorrow?'

'Yeah. We need to make some new poles. There was an accident with the last set. I've got a draw knife and there's a stand we can take them from in the wood. I had a look today. Shouldn't be too hard. And I had a look for a level site. We can maybe have a barbecue. And I'm also going to do the motherlode of laundry!'

'So, you invited me here to have an excuse to clean the house (good job boy) and do your washing?'

'And go camping, and have a bit of a party. And have you meet more of my friends.'

'Yeah. I'm teasing you boy. It's alright. I'm kind of flattered that you're being normal not all fancy like. Speaking of. Will I see Hannibal this time? I liked him. I wasn't sure I would. But I did, I do.'

'Yes. He's coming tomorrow. Though I haven't persuaded him to sleep in the tent! He'll have one of the beds inside! He's going to stay and have dinner Saturday night. I think the others

will be off after lunch. Is that ok? Not too much? We can have Sunday just us, or Hannibal can stay, he said he'd leave that up to us. See how it goes? What do you think dad?'

Beau looks at his son. He sees in him the little lad of fourteen unsure if his dad was going to be cross or pleased about his latest school report. Way too many 'a's for a Graham boy. So his oldest brother said. It had made Will worry all the way home.

'It all sounds fine. Lets see about Sunday. Maybe Hannibal stays over and goes Sunday morning or later. I expect he likes to get as much time with you as he can. You're both busy and you're on the road a lot at the moment.'

Will looks at his dad.

'What. You thought I didn't know, or guess or something. I've known for years. Since you were a kid at least. Why should I be worried. Apart from the suits. I mean. Really? Plaid and Paisley. That is a man not afraid of making a statement. I like his boldness. He's also a funny guy. For a European. How long you actually been dating then?'

'I'm not sure we actually are yet. It's been a bit weird. Sorry, dad, wait. This is a bit weird. I was getting ready to do the big reveal you know!'

Beau laughs out loud, his funny son. 'Sure. Of course you were. Lets pretend for a moment I have no clue. What would you say'

'Oh. Err. Dad, there's something I want you to know. I'm sort of seeing my psychiatrist, who is European, and some kind of nobility (I know, really) and by the way is a man.' Will laughs too,

'Your way was much better!'

'Good. But tell me about the not quite dating? What's with that?'

'It's partly because he's been my doctor. I've been a bit flaky, so it's kind of made things difficult. Is he my doctor, is he not. Is he behaving therapeutically (no dad, don't snort, that's not a euphemism), is he just having conversations with me. The lines have got a bit blurry and that's made it difficult. He's got a bit entangled with the work side of things. And I lean on him a bit too much. Probably.'

'But you want to date him?'

'Yeah. I might already be? I'm not 100% sure'

'What does he say?'

'I haven't exactly asked him'

'Not to worry. I'll ask him about his intentions towards my son'

'Dad!'

Beau laughs at the expression on Will's face 'oh, priceless! Just priceless.'

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Will knows instantly that Beverly and Beau will be a thing. It's love at first witty aside. Jimmy and his dad shake hands and do a weird fist bump or something straight off. Zeller and he grin at each other. The two interns are a bit shy but are also peppy. And his dad likes peppy. And Hannibal gets hugged.

Will wishes he'd put a bet on it with one of the science team. They'd got here first and Bev asked Beau if he got on with Hannibal when she knew for sure he was coming and that they'd met. She has a little mental boggle at the thought. Beau and Hannibal, with Will the common denominator? Ok. She'll take it. Does he even know?

'Will's fancy man?' He says it so deadpan. They couldn't tell if he was joking, or being snide or what. Until he pokes Will in the ribs 'oh yeah. I like him a lot. As long as he sees my boy right. If he breaks Will's heart, there will be hell to pay. His suits will suffer a fate worse than death.'

When Hannibal arrives, in the early evening, beer has already been drunk, the barbecue is almost ready, the teepee is up, bedding has been put out inside as has the heater, so it's toasty warm. Everyone is wrapped up whilst they hop around outside of the tent waiting for the food to go on the grill. For that, really they've been waiting for Hannibal.

He texted Will about two hours ago to say he was having some trouble with a patient and that they shouldn't wait for him. So they waited. Of course they did. You wait for your friends. Don't you? When he does arrive they all cheer and he gives a small bow. Tired but present. And Beau hugs him. Hannibal hugs him back briefly. Momentarily surprised by how like Will he smells and feels. There's a kind of wriggle he does at the end of the hug that is Will all over.

Will hugs him too, for longer then he expected. And then keeps an arm around him for a few beats longer as he commends their food to the flames. Jimmy and Zeller have a brief fight over who looks after the grill. Beau laughs and brings over a chair from the porch. He goes back and brings another for Hannibal, with a blanket.

'You look cold and tired. We'll make nice for a bit. Then maybe tease you and make fun of that thing round your neck which I guess is a tie'

'I am grateful for all those things, even the comment about the tie. I'd like to say your son gave it to me just to see you get out from under that one. But he didn't. Though if I thought he'd go along with it I'd give it a go. I fear though he thinks too much of you to let his taste go thus sullied. He is not fond of this one. Or indeed of most of my ties'

'He is my boy'

'Indeed'

Beau grins, and Will steps into the moment thinking his dad is possibly going to go too far, he's seen Hannibal this tired after a bad patient situation. And it's best to let him ease out of it, find his way back. Hannibal closes his eyes. A glass of wine has found its way into his hand. Good. He opens his eyes and sees Beverly in front of him crouching down.

'Can I get you anything? You do look a bit tired. Are you warm enough?'

He is touched, by this, by Will's solicitousness, by Beau's welcome. He is tired, and possibly a little emotional. He grasps Beverly's hand briefly but firmly. 'Thank you. I am well.'

'Ok, but do say'

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As the evening starts to wind down sleeping arrangements are agreed and made. Will takes Hannibal indoors to make sure he is comfortable.

'I suspect there is no possibility of persuading you to stay with me tonight?'

'Well. I am a bit leery of my dad deciding to have a wander in the night, and you know walking in on something.'

'Putting aside the nature of the something. The reality might be different to his imaginings?'

'Yeah. It's one thing for him to be fine with it and another to bring us tea in bed in the morning.'

'Have you asked him?'

'Err. No. you're right I should have. He's already surprised me multiple times. He asked if we were dating. He said he'd ask what your attentions were to his son'

Hannibal raises his eyebrows.

'He said he was saying it to get a rise out of me.'

'Did it work?'

'Little bit'

'What else did he say?'

'He asked me what you said about it'

'And?'

'I said I hadn't asked you?' Will's voice rose at the end, an upward inflection that turned it into a question.

'Do you wish to?'

'It's more than that isn't it? Dating sounds kind of vague, uncommitted. That's not how I feel we are at all?'

'Already conjoined? More then the sum of our parts?'

'Yeah. I'm a better version of myself when I'm with you, when we're together. Even if the others are here. Better. Nicer. Smarter too. I'm different to how I was. Is it something like that for you? It's hard for me to get a read?'

'Did you think you'd changed me too?'

'Yeah, I think I already did. It's not straightforward. There's some things we've not quite resolved but. Well. We've known each other six months, nearly. I know it's not quite..'

'Settled? Clear?'

'Both of those. We've both got things to deal with. Mine. You know about most of it. But that doesn't mean we've managed to sort it out.'

'Easier to talk about it than to work through it?'

'Yeah. And I'm doing the heavy lifting in this conversation right now.'

'You're right. There are a range of elements not yet arranged. Some we have already managed. Some. Not yet. I know it won't necessarily be plain sailing. There are some matters I have not yet been forthright about. Which I am endeavouring to find a way to talk about.'

'Ok. But you're going to, you want to?'

'Yes.'

'Good enough for now. I won't avoid the conversations either. Just try and talk to me when I'm in my own mind maybe?'

He smiles at Hannibal. Hannibal has unconsciously been getting undressed as he and Will have been talking, he's now pulling on pyjamas and looking around for where he laid his robe. He wraps himself in it and ties the belt. Hannibal looks a question at Will.

'I like how you basically got naked and clothed all the while we're having a relationship conversation. It's kind of distracting.'

Hannibal looks down at himself. He hadn't thought about it. He feels sufficiently comfortable with Will that this kind of vulnerability seems the least of the challenges ahead of them.

'Effective?'

Will nods, his mouth dry for a moment. He swallows and watches Hannibal track the movement in his throat.

'Will?'

'Yeah. I might be reconsidering.' He looks back to the front of the house, he's already been gone slightly too long. He looks back at Hannibal who keeps his face as neutral as possible. Will sighs.

'Maybe tomorrow? If you can stay?'

Hannibal smiles and nods and beckons Will across the bed. Will lets himself down on the bed but keeps his shoes on, Hannibal looks at them 'is this a Victorian drama where the hero ensures the virtue of the heroine but insisting he keeps one foot on the floor at all times?'

Will laughs 'are you the virtuous heroine?'

'Certainly'

The next few minutes are spent exploring the limits of that virtue. Within the constraints they have set for themselves.

'So. We are a thing then?'

.....

When Will returns to the tipi he finds that Bev and his dad are still talking, they both grin at him as he comes in. He spent five minutes outdoors in the cold thinking about terrible things to get his erection to subside. Both his friend and his father look entirely too knowing in that moment for his comfort. He pretends to ignore them and shucks off his coat, sweater, shirt and finally his pants.

Beau says 'you know we're teasing don't you? You could've stayed inside. I'd bring you tea in the morning.'

Will looks at his father 'I love you dad'.

Beau looks nothing but delighted.

# Chapter 4

Chapter Summary

Will, Beau, Hannibal, cooking, eating, discussing murder. Kind of an alternative to a Murder Family, where they talk about it, and how to stop Will from getting completely lost. Will and Hannibal finally get some good sexy time together. With not a cue ball or shot in sight.

Yup, still rubbish at summaries.

Chapter Notes

Sexy times ahead, NSFW, depending on your place of work...

See the end of the chapter for more notes

In the morning Hannibal thinks to make lots of friends by making coffee. He washes, dresses and prepares for the day. Opening the flaps of the teepee he is met by six sleeping human bodies and one wakeful one and seven sleeping dogs snoring happily. The fire in the stove is still alight.

So maybe not coffee then, or at least, 'coffee?' He mouths at Beau. Beau nods and extracts himself from his sleeping bag, and nest of dogs and mats and pillows. He grins at Hannibal as he steps over the various bodies between him and the doorway. They walk quietly back to the house together.

'You sleep ok?'

'I did. Thank you. And you?'

'I slept fine. You know Will's sleepwalking again?'

'Did he last night? He hasn't for a while. He had a bad time after the incident around thanksgiving? He told you?'

'Yeah, he did. It's not a good sign is it? Can't be. What's going on for him?'

'He is reviewing some old cases. They're not easy. There is still ongoing trouble in relation to the Hobbs case, and currently a resurrection of an old Viking torture.' Hannibal pauses, enumerating them all like this is profoundly disturbing. There are so many. 'oh and there's something extraordinary in relation to an old disappearance. And an ongoing case to do with

the Blue Mountains. It's excessive, even for the team. Especially Will. I'm sorry. There is plenty of challenge and some internal trouble too.'

'From the Feds?' Hannibal nods,

'That's real swell of them. Bastards. Don't worry, I won't say it to Will. He'll feel he ought to defend them. I know.'

'The case with Gideon is also affecting him' Hannibal pauses 'Beau, I am reluctant for you to think ill of me, but part of it may be because Will and I have struggled to find a firm footing. I regret it enormously. I don't want what he and I share to be put aside but there are obstacles to navigate. I tell you this both so you might be prepared, and so that you can be reassured that my intentions (Beau smiles at the word) towards Will are of the long term kind. The permanent sort. I also know that whilst I do provide him with a kind of stability it means he is more likely or at least inclined to risk himself in the field. It's something I find hard to reconcile.'

'You've said this to him?'

'Yes. The lost boys case was a catalyst for some difficult truths'

'Yeah, we talked about it on the phone. He cried.'

Hannibal didn't know this. He feels a touch of guilt that he gets to hear what's going on for Will that he doesn't share with Hannibal. Of course Hannibal doesn't know that Mischa tells Will of his confessions and concerns. Their relationship is more balanced than perhaps either of them know.

'I am sorry for that. I am not shying away from these difficulties. But I think it better that you are aware that they exist.'

'You're alright by me Hannibal. Anything else?'

Hannibal looks at him and drinks several mouthfuls of coffee. 'There are some family matters I need to tell Will of at some point. He is aware there is something. I am finding it difficult to talk about. But I am going to. I have said as much to Will.'

'Saying this to me makes you more likely to?'

'I hope so.'

'You're still alright with me. Tell me a bit about the others. The Science Team...'

.....

By lunch everyone has talked, walked, learnt how to make a fly or pumpkin preserves, or apple chutney, and is basically pretty content. Beau has made sure to talk individually with each of the science team. He'd heard a bit about all of them from Will and now Hannibal. But the horse's mouth means he gets a feel for the way they shape around the words they use. There are currents and eddies in their confluent streams and Beau can see how they all move

along, each of the waxing or waning with the tide and each other. He can see how they might be good for Will.

Will is looking happy today. Beau had caught him trying to leave the tent in his sleep last night. At first Beau had thought he was sneaking out to join Hannibal after all. But he recognised it, not just from the cabin, but back when Will was at school. He'd had a bad time being bullied at school. Now Beau wonders if it's the cases that are bullying him. He's glad for Will that Hannibal is there for Him. But he can slo see the quandary this places them in. Difficult.

After lunch the science team and interns clear up in the tent and the remnants of the meal. In a cheerful way they squabble their departures until it's just Hannibal, Will and Beau.

'Last time we did this Hannibal cooked Cajun. That was good. Any plans for dinner?'

'Actually dad I thought I'd cook. Wow. Thanks for the vote of confidence you two' neither Hannibal or Beau had cheered in delight.

'I like cooking Will. I would be happy to'

'I know. But I do too. Oh my god, this is our first fight!'

Beau and Hannibal both laugh. 'Alright, alright. How about we agree overall style and then do courses?'

'Count me out. I'm just here to cheer, or jeer. Depending.'

'Great. Thanks dad. Hannibal?'

'Will, I'm your guest, I couldn't possibly impose in this way.'

'Yeah, you could. No problem. Main or intros, 10 seconds to decide. Tick tick tick tick.'

'This could be our first argument if you try just a little harder'

'Tick, tick, tick, tick'

'Will.'

'Oh. Alright. You're no fun. Hannibal, really. What would you like?'

'I'd be glad to cook and have you assist. Please.'

Will scrunches up his face 'you are indeed the guest, please, and thank you, that would be very guest-like of you. Dad you going to come and referee?'

'Sure, now you've settled that'

They spend much of the next hour sorting out what is needed for the meal. It turns out Hannibal brought some ingredients with him, just in case he was able to persuade Will to let

him hijack the kitchen. Despite the moment of disagreement earlier it's a companionable afternoon even when the three of them have to go to four local farmer's markets to find some random herb Hannibal wants.

In the early evening Beau half watches as Hannibal and Will cook supper. He likes the choreography between them, the easy happy affection. Beau's never had a gay thought in his life but watching the two of them he can see how it might run. He grins to himself. Never too late for an old dog to learn new tricks. Though he liked the girl from the science team a lot. Probably shouldn't think of her as a girl. She's not a teenager.

'I heard about the missing agent turning up. What's with that? I thought the Ripper did for her. That's right isn't it? Everyone thought so?'

'Yeah. Although she was never 'found',well, we can see why now'

'Hell of a thing'

'It is. Not surprisingly she's a bit distressed. She's under quite a bit of pressure to come up with some answers about it all. Apparently they got her away in less than a week.'

'Really? Ok. So that's the story right? Poor kid. You talked to her?'

'A little, the basics. I did her intake interview. Jack wants me to see if can get closer to what she knew when she went 'missing"

'That's going to be hard for you isn't it?'

'Yeah. We've talked about it' Will nods to Hannibal 'it's going to be a mixture of trying to empathise with her as a victim and with the person she was back then'

'Two years is a long time to live with the trauma, having to hide like that. From everyone.'

'I know. I'd thought maybe socially first. Just gently?'

'What do you think Hannibal?'

'I think Will is right to be cautious. For his own sake as well as hers'

'How bad is it going to be for your boss?'

'I can't really see there being any wins, unless she can specifically remember who she saw last, where the threat that tipped her over came from,'

'Have you got something in place if it makes both of you dulally?'

Will smiles. 'I've got the science team agreement in place that if I'm out of it for more than forty minutes they pull me out, even if I'm not done'

'That work for you Hannibal'

'I've argued for less. But it's a compromise agreement. Will originally said an hour'

'Ok. Compromise. I get it. Will, little lad, what happens if you get proper broke again?'

'I know. I know. I'm trying to work it out. I told Bev I should stop after six months. But I'm hoping for a bit of a rest over the holidays. Get some perspective. We've talked about maybe having a break in the spring.' He glances at Hannibal and lays a hand on his back. Smiles. Hannibal says nothing but smiles back.

'What happened about the doctor's, did you get the scan?'

'Oh. Err yeah. But only just. I had to change the appointment a couple of times. It was just too busy. I got some meds from my doctor, that's helped with the sleeping, which is great. My head's still bad.'

'Will kept a record of everything that's happened since going back into the field'

'Did you, can I see it?'

'Yeah. Ok dad' Will narrows his eyes at Hannibal and mouths the word 'reckoning Dr Lecter',, Hannibal smiles as he cubes an onion. Will washes his hands and goes out of the kitchen to pick up the file.

'Alright dad. Here you go. Don't make a fuss though, it'll just make me more anxious. Ok?'

'Sure, I'll say something appeasing and bland. Don't worry son.'

Beau sits and reads the file for the next fifteen minutes. He goes back and reads it again.'

In the meantime Will stands next to Hannibal leaning against him watching his dad. Hannibal carries on chopping.

'Will, honey, I don't like this at all. I'm glad you're being pro-active but this isn't good. Ok. Sorry. I'll try that again. You're making lots of good decisions about support. That's excellent. If you know there's something I can do I'd be glad to.'

'Alright, thanks dad. I'm going to grab a shower before we eat. Is that ok? Hannibal, I know everything is under control but I feel duty bound to ask?'

'Have your shower Will. Beau and I will keep each other entertained'

Will looks at them both and they retain an air of innocence, as he goes upstairs.

'Bad isn't it?'

'Worse than you thought?'

'Yeah, but at least he knows this time.' He makes an unhappy face 'sorry. It's a bit upsetting.'

'It is. I'm glad that we're all behind him'

'Me too'

They fall into silence then. Beau thinking regretfully about time lost. Hannibal thinking regretfully about Will's lost time and other symptoms.

.....

Later that evening, all of them full and sitting reading Beau declares his intention to sleep in the teepee again. He asks if he can borrow the dogs. He and Will go out and when Will returns he is alone.

'Ok. He's happy now. We got the stove going again. So. Would you rather I stay here with you, or I could go back to the teepee later.'

'Do you know what you would like?'

'I definitely want to stay. I'm a bit unsure about the rest'

'Foggy?'

'Just too overwhelmed by everything. Not you. You're great. Just. I got dad and the others here so that it would crowd everything else out, build up the credit balance of good things. It's good. I feel good. But there's so much in the background. Did Beverly mention she keeps running into Matthew Brown at the Gym? It freaked her out. But there's nothing she can do. Me neither. He's not done enough for us to get a restraining order. He's just there. Lurking. It bugs the hell out of me.'

'I spoke with your father about the various cases you're working. There are a lot. Is there any way Jack might be persuaded not to get you involved in the Miriam Lass situation?'

'I doubt it. God. I don't know. Look. Lets go to bed. See if I can let go of enough shit to focus properly'

'Nice to be in bed with someone and not have six other people sitting on the end of the bed commenting?'

'It's a good job I know you know the deal, that sounded way kinkier than I think you mean'

'Ahh. It's true, I'm not especially public in my affections.'

'Really? You've let me kiss you? You've embraced me in public'

'You're right. Maybe you're changing me more than I know. Shall we go to bed?'

'Yeah. Please.'

.....

Whilst Hannibal is showering, Will is lying in bed. He can't quite relax. He feels just a bit panicky. He knows it's because here is a moment when just maybe he could kickstart the next

phase of their relationship. And it could go either way. Hannibal returns from the bathroom and removes his robe. He slides into the bed beside Will and turns on his side to face him, propping himself up on his elbow. Resting his face in his hand.

'Hmm. Not quite alright then?'

'Sorry'

'Don't be. I'm trying to remember the phrase American teenagers used to use to describe being with someone, intimately, but with not much pressure.'

'Making out?'

'No, though that is useful as a descriptor, something else?

'Getting to second base? Or third?'

'Closer. Not what is eluding me.'

'Fooling around?'

'Yes indeed. I like that. Fooling around. Will. Come here, let's fool around a little'

Will laughs and lets himself be pulled closer so that they are kissing.

Kissing is fantastic. Gradually Will relaxes until all that he can feel is Hannibal, in his head and all round him. When Hannibal cups him through his nighttime shorts he moans so loudly he makes them both laugh. 'Do that some more, that's just ..'

Will starts to unbutton Hannibal's pyjama shirt and leans in and kisses his chest. Rubbing a nipple between his fingers. Then the other one. Hannibal pulls Will's tee shirt over his head, deliberately trapping his arms for a moment or two so they're stuck above his head. Will huffs. 'Hey, no bondage until we've discussed it!'

'And when we have?'

'Don't start talking!'

Hannibal laughs at him again and pulls the shirt off fully. He sits up in bed and removes his own shirt, undoing each button. Will watches him. Now achingly hard, he palms himself, trying to not lose it. He reaches for the cord on Hannibal's trousers and pulls, loosening them so he can get a hand inside. He feels all along Hannibal's length. He takes his hand back out and licks his palm then he's all business working Hannibal over. He's delighted when Hannibal clutches at him and there's a good dose of pre-come leaking from the tip making things move even more smoothly.

Hannibal doesn't waste time though, he pushes the band of Will's shorts down over his hips, freeing his cock and pulling his hand up and down. He keeps his hand moving all over Will's cock as he works his way down Will's body. Kissing, rubbing. Will loses himself between the

sensations coming from Hannibal and from Hannibal's mouth and hands, and his own feelings of pleasure. It's a beautiful drowning.

When Hannibal gets his mouth on Will sucking him thoroughly and devotedly Will thinks he might just lose his mind. And that it wouldn't be a bad way to go. With this angle it's harder for him to reach Hannibal's cock so he concentrates on holding on to Hannibal for dear life. He can't help but arch his back and let himself open up so that Hannibal can take more of him in, Will thrusts harder for a moment, Hannibal opening up his throat and taking him to the hilt.

He strokes the base of Will's cock, round his balls, and then in tight circles around and against his perineum, god, medics! Massaging his prostrate from the outside. It's only moments before Will gasps and tenses and then comes almost without warning.

Will's never been selfish in bed and he reaches for Hannibal who simply devours his mouth. Will loves the feeling of it, tasting himself on Hannibal's tongue. They both groan. God if this is how it's going to go then they might never leave Will's fold out couch. Ever. Will still trying to get close enough to Hannibal's cock when he says 'no need. I'm afraid you were rather effective previously' and doesn't that just turn Will on even more?

They both start to come down. 'Fuck. Fuck. That was. Fuck'

'Yes.'

'Hannibal?'

'Yes?'

'Lets try really hard not to fuck this up. I already thought you were amazing. And now?'

'Yes. It is for me the same. You're, yes. Good.'

'Ok, you've almost lost your grasp if English. That's got to be good.'

'Yes, good. It has been some time. I had forgotten. Should we. Clean, I mean, Sleep? We....cloth?'

'Sleep. Fuck. Sleep. Shit, I haven't taken my meds. Hang on. I'll get them, I'll bring back a flannel or something too.'

'Thank you'

Whilst Will is gone from the room Hannibal retrieves his pyjama shirt and trousers. He does up the shirt and waits for Will to return with a cloth. He wipes himself thoroughly and pulls his trousers back on. They both rake a deep breath or two Will smiles and then says 'oh yeah, my dad! He'll bring tea in the morning. Better watch out for that!'

'Useful information. I'm glad to know. Before we shock him as well as the dogs.'

'I think they were traumatised after the whole Bevergram thing.'

'Will?'

'Hmm?'

'Thank you.'

'God, I'm going to kiss you again, and then we're going to try and sleep, mainly so my dad doesn't get yet more ammunition.

'He's a good man.'

'He is.'

That night Will doesn't sleep walk. In the morning Beau brings them tea and a cookie each and winks lewdly at both of them.

'I already regret introducing him to Beverly'.

Hannibal smiles.

Chapter End Notes

One or two chapters to go and then it will definitely match up with the next instalment. Says the author with every impression of confidence in their life and writing choices.

# Chapter 5

Chapter Summary

Mischa tells Will the whole sad story.

References to domestic violence in the past.

References to spousal killing in the past.

References to parental deaths in the past

Will is a great listener...

And have some phone sex at the end of the day, because ... reasons

Chapter Notes

TW. References to spousal domestic abuse, spousal killing, and killing of abusive parent.

If this was any other fandom it might be weird. But chapter ends with some very enjoyable Hannigram phone sex.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Sunday is leisurely. During a morning walk they cover the fields, all of them wearing boots. Beau had laughed at Hannibal when he found he'd had to go into a large diy store to find some. He'd settled on dark blue, though he'd have preferred an oxblood colour. They're well wrapped up. It's cold but not so much so that they regret it. With his hands stuffed into his pockets Beau turns a small rectangle of card over between his fingers. It was there when he got up and dressed this morning. He hadn't noticed it before, hadn't put this jacket on the previous day.

The card is Beverly's FBI work card, on the back she's inked in her personal cell number. With a winky face at the end. Beau is a both intrigued and flattered. He liked her. Quite a bit. Yeah yeah, a lot actually. If he didn't feel like her grandad or something. Maybe just her dad? Age wise at least. He looks over at Will currently frowning at the grass as he walks along.

'Will? How's your head?'

'What? Oh. Sorry. Ok. I guess. Bit painful. I'm so fed up of it'

'Do you want to go back? Is the cold making it Worse?'

Will stops. He looks back across the field to where he can see the house at the very edge of his field of vision. In the cool crisp day it looks ok. Nothing frightening here. He's still angry that it's been slightly alienated for him. Matthew Fucking Brown.

'I don't think so. Oh. We could go and see the Parliament thing. Hannibal, was it you I told there was a natural amphitheatre in the woods? The stag men said they'd fixed a place here. Did I tell you this? Was it Bev? Sorry. I don't know any more. It's harder to keep things straight.'

'Yes. I know about some of it. Beverly wouldn't let us see it on the grounds of something called the Blair Witch Project? Some research?'

'Oh ok. It's a film. It's like a pseudo documentary in places, it kicked off the found footage genre really, its quite unnerving, shall we, it's not far'

They push through some brush into the wood proper and there's a path that Will's walked many times in the past. After maybe ten minutes he stops,

'We just go down a little way. The path carries on and out the other side of the wood, there's another service road there. Doesn't come out past me, but it's a way to get to my place if ever the main road isn't passable. Useful in the zombie apocalypse or something.'

'You think that likely?'

'The zombie apocalypse?'

'No, that you might need another route out?'

'I don't think so, just useful to have one I guess. Ok. We might have to scramble a bit down here, steady'

At the bottom of the slope they stand and look up round the shallow amphitheatre, just three 'rows' of seats. They've all been cleared of brush and smaller scrub and trees. There's a fallen tree, its roots stick out into what would be the stage. It has been partly chainsawed, to turn it into a roughly hewn seat. All around the seat the roots have been trimmed or cut off or woven together, to make a kind of halo around a throne. There are willow twig stars hanging from the roots.

At the top of the slope, where the amphitheatre ends all those trees have stars too. In some of the 'seats' there are woven animals and birds. Six more. To complement the six the team already have.

Beau looks around in amazement. 'This is some seriously odd shit. It's kind of beautiful, but only if it's benevolent. If it's not then it's very weird indeed. Will, lad, you going to get you techy people out?'

'I'm not sure what different it could make. It should be photographed I guess and maybe someone should check for trace, but otherwise? I don't know what use it would be. Hannibal? Any thoughts?'

'I think a photographer should come and get at least a record of how it is now. In case it changes.'

'Ok. Yeah. I see that. Crap it's Sunday. Ok. I think it, oh maybe not. Let's see if I can get reception'

They walk back away from the 'parliament' to the edge of the wood. Will checking his cell phone every fifty yards or so. When he finds it he calls Jack.

.....

The techs spend three hours in the woods in the afternoon. Will supplies them all with coffee and cake on their way out there and the way back. Not everyone's favourite way to spend a Sunday afternoon, but they are surprisingly cheerful about it 'no corpses or stink, it's a win for us' whispers one of the guys, 'worth it for the cake' says another 'got me away from lunch with the in-laws' says the third. They smile at Will, they all know him a little, and wow isn't his dad like him. And this is the boyfriend right? He makes good cake.

When they're gone Will stretches his back and sighs. Couldn't it just be a little bit normal for a while? Hannibal retreats into the kitchen to make dinner. Beau retreats into a crossword. Will retreats into his brain, and not liking what's there he finally picks up a book. He realises that what he feels is tired and emotional. Though the case is solved more or less, it doesn't quite feel over. How did the guy get up there. It's like one of those impossible puzzles. But it was real, he was there.

'You going to sigh? Or you going to talk?'

'Both, probably.'

'Done with it all?'

'So done with it all'

'Going to stop?'

'Thinking about it seriously'

'Hannibal got a view?'

'Not an unbiased one'

'That's sort of the point lad'

'I suppose.'

'I'm not going to harangue you. You itching?'

'Little bit, I felt so angry at the scenes. It really got to me, lashed out at Jack'

'Was the guy angry?'

'I guess. Maybe more than I realised'

'I think we should have you empathise with kawaii cats or something'

'Dad, how do you even know about that?'

'Will. It's amazing there's this incredible thing called the internet'

'Yeah. Alright'

'I love you Will'

'Thanks.'

'Give us your hand'

Will stretches his hand out to his dad, and his dad uses his non pencil holding one to hold on.

'What now?'

'What? Nothing. I'm just holding your hand. Should have done more of it when you were little'

'Dad!' Will gets a little choked.

'It'll be all right lad. If it all goes to shit we'll be here for you. I know I wasn't. But I will be.'

'I'm sorry. Too. I wasn't there either'

'Both are now'

'For sure'

'Alright then, stand up give me a hug, I expect dinner's almost done, let's set the table. You got any decent flatware?'

.....

They sit up a little too late than is good for them. Beau goes off to sleep in the tipi, he's off the following day. Will cries a little. Hannibal holds him close, quietly, just soothing touches. When Will wakes briefly in the night he has been dreaming of his resignation letter. He's starting to think seriously about it.

In the morning, after breakfast Hannibal makes his farewells to Beau, and leaves for various appointments with patients. Later he is meeting with Alana to take her and Abigail Hobbs to some kind of assessment and interview. They are still waiting for Nicholas Boyle to wake up

to progress the various murders that Abigail, possibly Matthew and Nick could be charged with if enough evidence can be found.

Will is on call for the day, he has a class to give and he asks Beau if he'd like to come with him. Surprised but interested Beau agrees.

Once in the lecture theatre Beau can see why and how Will is so good at what he does. He gets a little distant and that just adds to the electric feel of being just too close to a killer for comfort. Beau knows Will's gift (don't call it a gift dad, it's a bloody nuisance) takes him to terrible places, and that he doesn't always come back alone. But it's a startling thing to see him bring some of the murders he talks about to life. Beau feels wrung out by the end. But most of the students laugh and seem to relish the output. Grim.

They eat a late lunch together and Will drives him to the airport.

'Thanks. It meant a lot to me. I'm so grateful dad'

'Yeah alright' Beau turns gruff with emotion 'I'll see you soon. Maybe sometime in the holidays or something? Gotta see the grandkids for Christmas itself. But around then?'

'Good idea. We'll talk though right?'

'Can't keep a Graham man quiet you know'

.....

After dropping his dad Will heads to Baltimore. He's got the keys and has arranged to let the chimney guy in to sweep the library chimney. In the back of his mind he's been hoping that Mischa might choose to put in an appearance, continue their discussion. He's not disappointed.

'Hello Will. Hannibal said you would be here today for the chimney man'

'Yes. That's right. I'd hoped he tell you. I realised that I don't even know if you go out much'

'Sometimes. Not often. When we're away somewhere, more so.'

'Do you try to stay private here?'

'I should tell you the whole thing, it will help to explain. You remember I said that I was allowed to be here because Hannibal looks after me?'

'I do. There's more to it isn't there?'

'It's a condition of me being here, in the US. I was convicted as a juvenile so in theory my record is sealed. But we had to declare it when I came to live here. It was complicated. Even the embassy got involved. I'm allowed to be here as long as Hannibal guarantees my behaviour. I get easily overwhelmed and I'm not very good with 'impulse control' so I try and have a quieter life'

'Ok. I understand.'

'Do you want me to tell you what happened?'

'Mischa, you don't have to tell me anything you don't want to'

'I'd like to. I think Hannibal thinks it will scare you away. I'm not so sure. I think you're quite generous. I think I will. Alright? It is a bit awful. I won't mind if you think less of me. I might, if our roles were reversed'

'Why don't you tell me and we'll see?'

'Alright. When I was seven bad things started happening at home. I don't need to tell you this bit. It wasn't very nice though. Hannibal was away at school so he didn't really know. He had exams, he was only sixteen don't forget.'

'He's nine years older than you?'

'Yes, like you?'

'Yeah. That's right'

'Eventually, after it had been happening for a while I couldn't bear it any more. I really didn't like it, but I wasn't sure what to do. So I told my Uncle. My father's older brother. I thought my father would listen to him. He didn't believe me. And my aunt backed him up. There was a big argument. My father pushed my mother down the stairs. She couldn't get up. And he just left her there all day. I sat beside her trying to get her to wake up. It's possible I actually hurt her more from shaking her. She broke her spine. She might have survived if I'd left her alone' she takes a deep breath and Will just listens full of fear for her.

'My father just kept stepping over her when he went up or down stairs, it made me so wild. He left her there for three days. I didn't know what to do. I was very frightened and angry. I tied some thread across the top step. The first time he broke it when he walked through it. I don't think he even knew it was there. But the second time I got it right. They used that in court. That I'd already tried and then tried again.'

'He fell all the way down two flights of stairs and definitely died. He just lay there all twisted and I was so relieved. I'd thought he'd start to hurt me if mother wasn't there. Or maybe Hannibal.'

'What did you do?'

'I called the police. That's what you're meant to do if you're in trouble. So I did. Then I called Hannibal. He'd just done his final school exams. I knew he'd be alright. He could go to college and everything. He got on a train straight away and came to the police station where they took me.'

'Everyone said that there was a good case to make for self defence, I was only a small child. My uncle argued with Hannibal about it a lot. There were medical assessments and

psychiatric interviews. I used to wonder if Hannibal became a psychiatrist because if it, but I don't think so now.'

'I didn't deny it. I explained that papa had been hurting my mother, but that didn't seem to matter. Don't forget that Lithuania was only just becoming independent. It was a difficult time. And my case become a little bit famous. Some people thought I was a hero. Some people thought I must be evil. I was mostly sad. I loved my parents.'

In the end they said I had to go into a sort of secure hospital. I got the maximum sentence they could give me. Twenty five years. I was released five years ago. Chiyoh came for me and looked after me. My parole meant I had to stay in Lithuania for the first year. That was difficult because people remembered. Afterwards I was allowed to come here. But Hannibal has to look after me and financially support me. I'm sorry. I know it will affect you too. If you are with Hannibal.

'Do you know why he is reluctant to tell me?'

'I think he is afraid. Of lots of things. That you won't be able to stand it. That you'll be angry with him for not telling you straight away. For wanting something nice that he doesn't think he deserves, he feels very guilty still that he didn't know what was really going on. That he didn't do something to protect mama or me. That because he has to look after me you won't think he has the ability to look after you. That he's afraid of letting anyone in because that's when you get hurt. Because he's not good with vulnerability. That if he gets it wrong more people will suffer. Maybe he's worried that I won't deal well with someone else in his life. He's careful about his friendships. Doesn't usually let people get too close. I don't know. Lots of reasons. Not all of them bad. But not all of them good either.'

'Yes. I understand'

'It's also that because of your empathy I think he's afraid you'd get overwhelmed by just how sad we are.'

'Oh Mischa. I'm sad because it is sad. Not just because you are. Maybe I haven't done enough to earn his trust, if he feels he can't tell me. I've been rather rubbish company or relationship material lately. Maybe I've leant on him so much he hasn't been able to lean in return.'

'Both sides of an arch need to lean in order for it to stand'

'Exactly that. I know it's easy for me trip myself into assuming this is my fault, that's he's not told me. I know it's more complex than that.'

'What do you think now?'

'Do you remember I said I admired you?'

'I do. I felt very happy afterwards'

'That hasn't changed one bit. More if anything. Both of you.'

Will holds out one of his hands resting it on the table that's between them. Mischa takes it and holds it, quietly.

'I don't know if I can make Hannibal tell you. But maybe the plan will mean it doesn't matter?'

'I hope he does tell me'

'So do I, but better to have a backstop'

'You're right. Will he be angry with you for telling me?'

'Maybe only for a moment, because he is afraid'

'Of?'

'Losing you.'

.....

Later when Will is back at Wolf Trap tidying up from the remnants of his dad's visit and Hannibal's stay. He sits on the edge of the folded out couch. He rests his head in his hands. Awful. Just awful. A terrible thing. And it explains Mischa's air of innocence, it's a kind of reaction to institutionalisation, too mature in some ways and lacking in others. Horrible. He knows he will have to work at that just so that Hannibal doesn't pick up on the sympathy he knows he is currently giving off in waves.

When they talk later in the evening Will tries to keep it light and cheery. Hannibal though is feeling down after his interactions with Abigail and Alana.

'I think in the new year I will review the situation with Abigail. I am more convinced than ever that I am not appropriate for her continuing recovery.'

'Not a straightforward referral though?'

'No. and Alana thinks it is personal too'

'Oh? That's a bit of a nuisance'

'Yes. It is. I took them to the interviews with the police from Minnesota today.'

'The Marissa Schurr case?'

'Yes. I think Abigail sulked quite a lot of the time, she spent a lot of time hunched in the back seat wriggling and complaining about the journey and the car, she moved the pillows around rather a lot'

'The Bentley? That's surprising. I thought it was supremely comfortable, in particular because of the throw pillows.'

'She may have been making some point. If so it is one of which I am oblivious. And yes, I added the pillows simply so that passengers in the rear might be more comfortable'

Will suspects that that almost certainly means either Mischa or a Chiyoh.

'Maybe she just wanted the attention. She does like it'

'That is true. Let us talk of something else. I am tiring myself out. The chimney sweep came, thank you'

'Oh that was easy. No problem. I hope it's ok I made myself tea. Several times actually. I might have had a little snooze in the library'

'Good. I hope you were comfortable'

'I was. Have you lit the fire in there yet?'

'I had thought of it. If you were here. But I realise you have things to do in Wolf Trap'

'I do, I did. I've done some of them now. I do miss you when I'm not with you. You know that right?'

'Thank you. As do I. I was glad to see more of Beau. I wondered if you would let me have his number in case there is ever a situation in which it was necessary to contact him'

'Sure, let me get it, it's in my notebook'

Hannibal can hear Will rifling around in his bag. He so wishes Will were here with him right now. The 'fooling around' has done nothing to sate his appetite for Will. If anything it has ramped it up further.

'Ok. Got it. You still there?'

'Yes' Hannibal is just slightly breathless.

'You ok? Hannibal?'

'Will. I..'

'Hey, is this phone sex voice?'

'I wasn't aware I had one, but possibly'

'Really? Excellent. Because I'd like for that very much.'

'Will' Will can hear him swallow

'Fuck. Ok. You're in the library yes'

'Yes'

'Lying on the couch?'

'I am now'

Will can hear some rustling at the other end of the line, he's already undone his own pants and is carefully loosening himself from the confines of his boxers.

'Ok. I'm lying back in the armchair downstairs. I've got my pants undone and I've just moved my shorts down, just over the jut of my hips. You know.'

'Yes'

'Good. Yeah. I've got the elastic from my shorts kind of under my balls. It's pushing them up and kinda forwards, pushes my cock up too. I'm pretty hard, now. How're you doing?'

'Also hard'

'Rub your balls with one hand, the other I want on your cock. You doing that?'

'Yes. You?'

'Oh yeah' his voice dips lower and he hears Hannibal try and suppress a low groan 'wet now, sliding that around quite a bit. Yeah. That's good. Just moving my thumb over the slit. You wet now'

'Will. Please'

'If I was there I'd lick you, you know. Suck you hard. Do you know what that tastes like? Why I want you like that?'

'Why?'

'Everything you eat goes into you. You're going to taste fucking gorgeous. I want to taste it all'

He goes a little quiet for a moment or two

'Will?'

'Just getting round to fingering myself a little. I want that from you. You know. I want you to fuck me. Do you want to fuck me? Hannibal? Really fuck me. Hard.'

Will can hear Hannibal moan on the other end of the line, he can hear the wet sounds Hannibal's cock is making as he slides his hand up and down, wet with pre-come. It sounds completely filthy. God, Will is almost certainly going to come, and pretty soon.

'Are you close Hannibal, have you fingered yourself at all, you should, make sure your fingers good and wet. I'd use my tongue on you. Get you really ready. I want to fuck you too. With my tongue. With my fingers. Definitely with my cock. I've got a great cock. It'd look great in you. Fuck. I'm going to come soon. You going to come any time soon?'

'Yes. I'm close. I think... just..'

'What do you want baby? I'll give you anything, fuck, you're so gorgeous. You turn me on so much. Fuck. FUCK! Just. Thinking. I'm going to, Hannibal. Ohh'

Will's voice stutters, Hannibal barely notices, he's already coming all over his hand and stomach. Will calling him 'baby'. Aching from the build up and then the release.

'Will. I. Completely undone'

'Do you look ravished? I'd fucking ravish you again. You know that don't you? God. You always feel amazing. I'm just thinking about how you look now. You know it's going to be so good when we do this face to face'

Will can hear Hannibal trying to get his breathing under control on the other end of the phone.

'Yes. I do... I want that too.'

'You better'

'Will'

'Hannibal'

.....

Later still that night Will lies in bed idly wondering if the extremely enjoyable orgasm he had will both help him sleep, and help with his headache. Seems to be so far. Good medicine. God that was good. He hadn't been sure Hannibal would be into it. His cock makes a little effort again. 'Down boy' he says out loud and grins at himself.

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In Baltimore, Hannibal too is almost asleep. The benefits of a hard orgasm outweighing in his mind the possible ruination of an otherwise blameless shirt. Surprising that Will is so effective verbally like that. His cock stirs slightly and he feels warmed all over. If sex is going to be like this between them, there's will be not just a marriage of true minds. And Hannibal is beginning to think along those lines. In his own mind at least. Too soon for anything else. Yet.

Chapter End Notes

And, and, and, we link to the next section.

End Notes

I read a fic where Will's dad is called 'Beau' and what a great name that is. So I've borrowed it. Sorry to the person whose name it was. I don't know whose it was? I also don't know any 'Beaus' which somehow makes him easier to write.

One of my colleagues is named Abigail. I never knew an Abigail before, and she is the nicest thing. Not like the Abigail here.

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